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FROM

*Isatis*

4 Dec. 1901

# **A N O D E**

**ON THE**

**PROCLAMATION OF PRESIDENT JACKSON.**

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**BY JAMES NACK,**  
**THE DEAF AND DUMB POET.**

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**WITH A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.**

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**NEW YORK:**

**PUBLISHED BY MONSON BANCROFT, 389 BROADWAY.**

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*Gratis*

SLEIGHT & VAN NORDEN, PRINT.

## ADVERTISEMENT OF THE EDITOR.

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THIS Ode was not given to the public at the time it was written, as it was not desirable to call further attention to a subject on which popular agitation was already subsiding, in consequence of the masterly arguments embodied in the ablest state-paper of the times, and the judicious measures of the administration.

But now that the prophecy with which the poem concludes has already been accomplished,—now that every angry passion is allayed, and even those who for a moment were carried away by a generous but mistaken enthusiasm in an erring cause have listened to the dictates of reason and their better feelings,—now that one sentiment of fraternal harmony prevails from one end of the Union to the other,—there can no

longer exist any motive for withholding this as a public tribute to the Hero, the Patriot, and the Statesman, who has so effectually contributed to these inestimable results.

J. HANCOCK.

*New York, October, 1833.*

## MEMOIR OF JAMES NACK.

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CONFIDENT that we could not furnish a better article on the subject of this Memoir, we here subjoin the following from "Knapp's Sketches of Public Characters."

Among the most remarkable instances of precocious talents and acquirements is JAMES NACK, the deaf and dumb poet, of the city of New York. He is now not far from twenty years of age, but young as he is, he has written more voluminously than any poet among all those I have named. This young man's growth has been most wonderful. He was born with perfect organs of hearing and of speech, and retained them until he was nine years old, when by an accident his head was so crushed as to have destroyed his auditory nerves, and by degrees his faculty of speech was lost—a very natural consequence of his misfortune. His father had been unfortunate in business as a merchant in NACK's infancy, and he had no advantages of schooling but what he from time to time derived from his sisters, yet was considered a good reader at four years of age, and he had a passion, a very common one in forward children, of preaching—that is, in a solemn way, muttering over their fancies.



A bright and observing child sees the great attention and reverence that is paid to the services of the clergyman, not only by his parents and his brothers and sisters, but by all in the church. He is taught that the speaker is a good man, and in the first awakenings of his mind he attempts to imitate him. NACK had heard the singers in the church, and had caught something of the chiming of words, and once, being without a hymn book, he framed a couplet, for which he was applauded, and this encouraged him to make a few lines every day, and before he was in his ninth year he had a good knowledge of rhythm from a cultivated ear. This he has so completely kept in his memory, that I question very much whether there is any poet living who has a better knowledge of rhyming the words in English language than JAMES NACK.

At about twelve years of age NACK wrote a tragedy; this he destroyed; but his mind at that time was in one constant dramatic effort; it was an expedient to which he resorted to get rid of the deep wretchedness he felt at being, as it were, left alone with himself to contemplate his misfortune in losing his hearing and speech. In the regions of imagination he was soothed, and warmed with all the dreamy delights to be found in such fairy land; an expedient to which riper minds have resorted, to soften the agonies of the heart.

In his sixteenth year he wrote, with many other poems, that beautiful effort of genius, the *Minstrel Boy*. This came from his heart, and it reaches the heart of every

reader. It has a deep tone of feeling, a sweetness of language, and an ease of versification, that will secure its immortality.

Until his sixteenth year he had never found any one who was capable of understanding his character, and of giving him advice and encouragement united to friendship. It was then he began to feel the balmy soothings of kindness that came with advice and patronage. It was not until this period that he had found books, except by accident. He now was in the library of a gentleman of taste, who was as kind to him as a father. This situation opened a new world to him. He revelled in fresh delights; devoured books upon poetry, history, philosophy, fiction, mathematics, politics, ethics, criticism, and theology; formed a thousand theories and tore them up root and branch, for new creations; and these again shared the same fate. He wrote as well as read on all these subjects, and piled manuscript upon manuscript, which he sometimes viewed with all the rapture of genius, and then with freakish untowardness turned from his numerous progeny with loathing. With all the irritation of wounded sensibility, he grows feverish over his reminiscences, and then again hurries on to perform some new task. He seems to have no dread of any labor, however severe it may be, if it will please a friend, or come to any account for himself or others.

His acquirements at his early age, in the languages and all the branches of knowledge, ordinary and extraordinary,

are superior to those of any young man of the same age I ever met with. There is a strength and maturity about his mind not to be found in one who has had the use of his ears and tongue. His criticisms have a sagacity and shrewdness unequalled by those who were critics long before he was born. He acquires a language with the most astonishing facility. No one I ever knew, could do it with the same readiness, except the late learned orientalist, George Bethune English. NACK unites in a most astonishing degree those two seemingly inconsistent qualities, *restlessness* and *perseverance*. He reads, and writes, and does all things as though he had just breathed the Delphic vapor, and perseveres as though he were chained to the spot by some talismanic power. He is a bunch of delicate fibres, too susceptible for composure; or rather of nerves, jarred to agony, if struck by a rude hand. Poetical beings are often too sensitive when in possession of every natural property and gift; but when deprived of the charms of hearing and speaking, the pulses of the heart seem to beat in our own sight, without even the thinnest skin to hide them, open to every blast of a cold and cruel world. But in a few years he will find things changing around him, and these youthful labors now viewed as useless, will become in his opinion as the foundation stones of a goodly edifice, in the fashioning of which he has learnt the skill of a literary architect, and acquired the strength to raise a temple of imperishable fame, for his own and his country's glory.

To the preceding account it may not be amiss to add some details, which will probably be found interesting.

JAMES NACK was deprived of his hearing in the ninth year of his age, in consequence not only of a tremendous fall, but of a heavy frame of timber being at the same time precipitated upon, and crushing his head. It was a long time before he could be even recalled to life, and he has no recollection of the circumstances of his misfortune, except from the accounts of those who witnessed it.

The loss of his hearing was instantaneous ; but such was not the case with regard to his speech. His organs of articulation are not injured, but for want of an ear to guide his pronunciation, it has gradually become unintelligible for the most part ; for which reason he only makes use of his powers of articulation among those he has been brought up with, and who having become accustomed to the peculiarity of his pronunciation, can generally understand him. It is not to be doubted, that if by any possibility his hearing could be restored, he would be able by the mere guidance of his ear fully to recover the faculties of speech.

NACK is an instance of the importance of early instruction. Had his misfortune taken place before he had learned to read, no subsequent instruction could have given him that command of language, which he has acquired and retained by constant reading.

He was sent to the Deaf and Dumb Asylum, where he made great advances in arithmetic and grammar. For

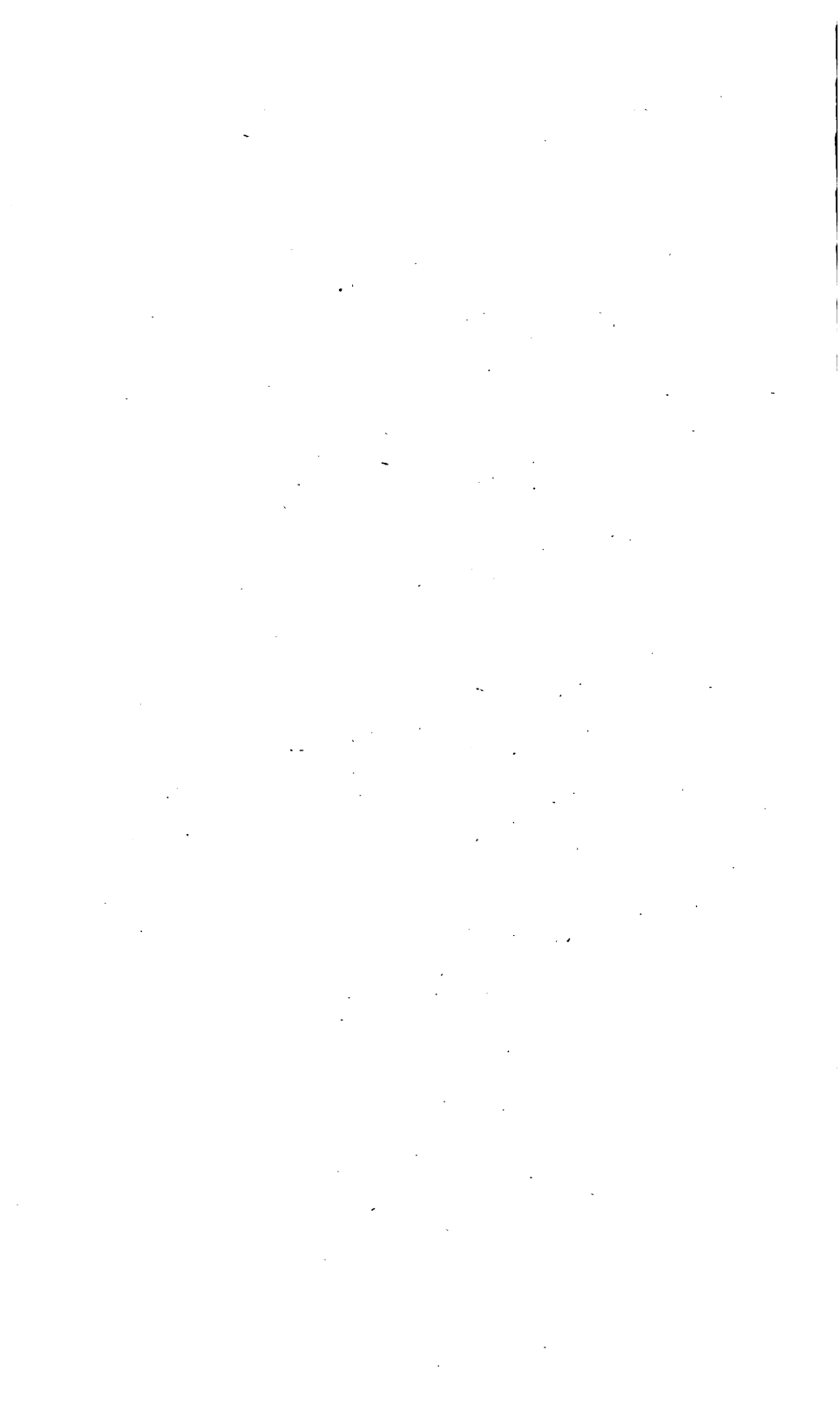
his other acquirements he is indebted solely to his own exertions, and an unremitting devotion to study.

Never was there a more remarkable illustration of the words of Horace, "*Poeta nascitur non fit.*" JAMES NACK is a poet of God's making. His talents have not been developed by instruction or encouragement; on the contrary, till his fifteenth year they were never noticed, otherwise than to be discountenanced. Still he persevered, for the god within him *would* have utterance.

The first of his productions that attracted the notice of any person capable of appreciating their merits, was the little poem of the *Blue-eyed Maid*, written in his fourteenth year. He had given a copy of it to a lad of his acquaintance; the boy handed it to his father, who from that moment conceived a favorable opinion of the young poet's abilities, and exerted himself to bring them forward, and in that object introduced him to several literary gentlemen; and among others to the gentleman alluded to in the preceding sketch. By their encouragement he was induced to issue a volume of poems; and though it consisted entirely of productions written between his fourteenth and seventeenth years, it met with the most decided success. The impression it has made upon good judges, may be estimated by the following extract from the New England Magazine, with which we shall close these remarks.

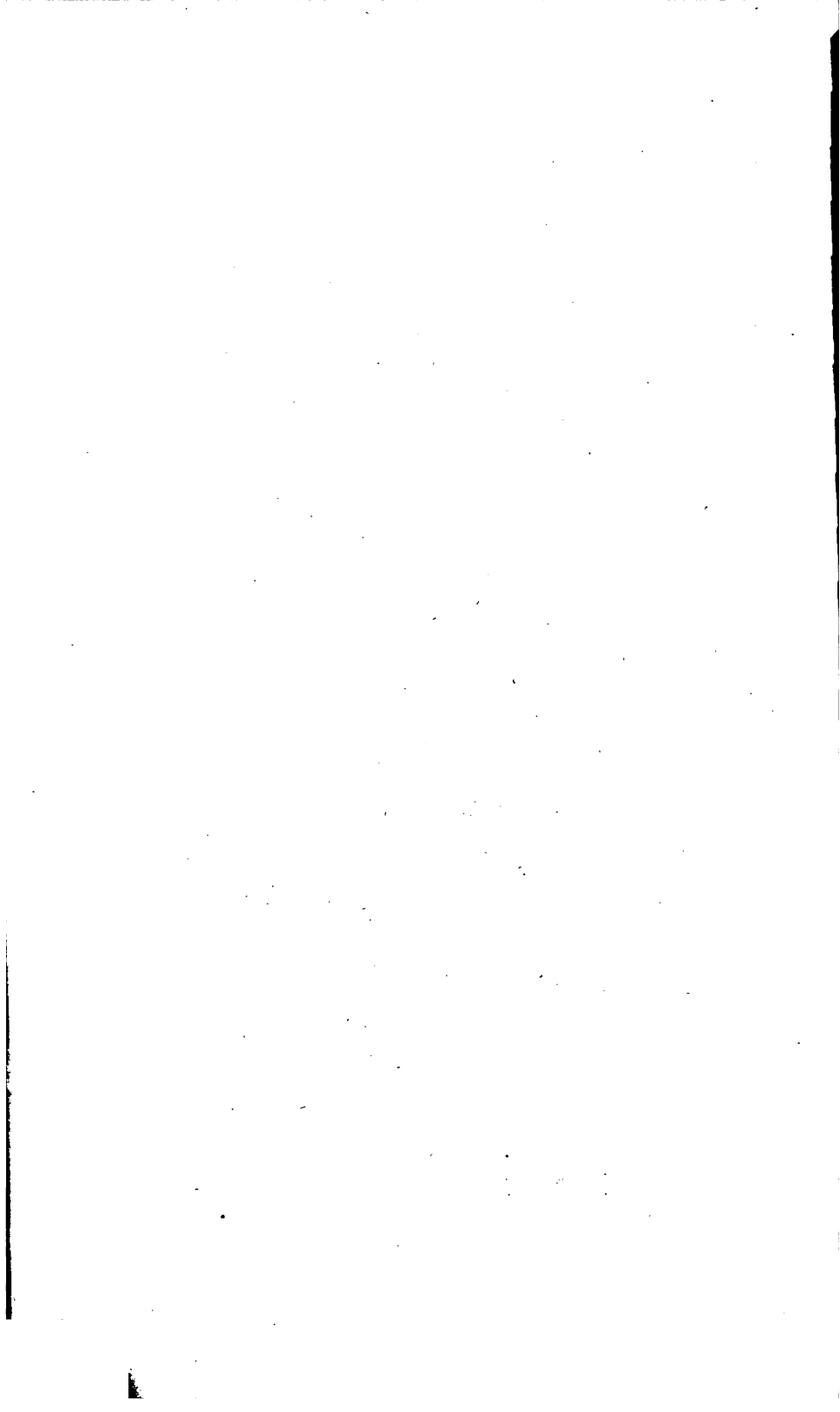
"For precocity of talent and attainment under circumstances peculiarly unpropitious, JAMES NACK, the deaf and dumb poet of New York, is an intellectual wonder. As far

as known, Christendom contains nothing comparable to him. All things considered, Chatterton did not equal him. He has not yet attained his twentieth year. He has known none of the advantages of a liberal education, has never had, until recently, free access to books, and has felt through life the unsparing hand of poverty and misfortune ; and yet he has written much, and many of his productions are of a high order ; all of them are marked with the rich and fervid outpourings of genius. For intensity, and all that gives to poetry its highest character, they are not surpassed, we think not equalled, by any of the early productions of Lord Byron ; and those juvenile offerings of the noble bard have never received the commendation they merit. It is not too much to say of this gifted young American, that, when matured by time, and finished by labor, some of his future efforts in song may equal the happiest of those that have immortalized the author of *Childe Harold*."



**A N O D E.**





TO

A N D R E W   J A C K S O N,

P R E S I D E N T   O F   T H E   U N I T E D   S T A T E S.

---

OH thou, whose valiant arm arose  
The terror of invading foes,  
To shelter from their murderous rage  
The helpless babe and feeble age,  
To shield from ruin and despair  
Our matrons chaste, our daughters fair,  
For which thy name to beauty's ear  
Must be of every name most dear ;  
And lisping infants bless that name,  
And youth exults to swell its fame,  
And gray-haired sires on bended knee  
Invoke the King of kings for thee !

Again in this momentous hour  
Thy country claims thy guardian power,  
From direr foes than Europe's shore  
Could in her fiercest fury pour ;  
*Her* legions never could subvert  
The precious rights that we assert,  
Tho' all the land became a grave—  
Destroy they may, but ne'er enslave !  
This firm resolve by all declared,  
We stand for open foes prepared.

But these, the serpent race accurst,  
Within their country's bosom nurst,  
Who there in fondness seem to cling,  
The better to inflict a sting ;  
These, who usurp the patriot's name,  
To scatter treason's brands of flame,  
With these the arduous strife to wage,  
Demands the hero and the sage,  
A strength of soul, a gifted mind,  
A heart paternal, firm, tho' kind,

Such as the world as yet has known  
In godlike WASHINGTON alone :  
Such as the world again shall see,  
Thou, second WASHINGTON, in thee !

Oh may thy erring children learn,  
The traitors from their ear to spurn,  
Who with unhallowed guile advise  
To trample on the holiest ties,  
Who bid them rend the links apart  
That chain them to their country's heart,  
Who tell them 'twere a deed of pride  
To lift the arm of parricide,  
And with a brother's blood profane  
The soil, still ruddy with the stain  
Of the libations that were poured  
To freedom by their fathers' sword.

Look down ! look down, ye sainted sires,  
One moment from the angel choirs,  
To scenes your blood has sanctified,  
Where ye have battled, conquered, died —

How little could ye have believed  
That all the glories ye achieved,  
That every countless sacrifice  
Ye gladly paid as freedom's price,  
That all that ye have wrought and borne  
Your children yet should turn to scorn,  
And throw away in factious rage  
The blessings of their heritage !

Hark ! they with eager voice disclaim  
A charge of such o'erwhelming shame,  
Asserting that they but defend  
The rights that from their sires descend ;  
Deluded men ! is this the way  
Your fathers would have wrought to day ?  
Remember how they firmly stood  
To suffer for their country's good,  
What mighty hardships they sustained,  
And never murmured, scarce complained,  
And shall our petty hardships break  
The bond it cost so much to make ?

What ! would your fathers be the tools  
Of factious knaves or noisy fools,  
Who mid the wreck to snatch a prize,  
Or from obscurity to rise,  
Would set the temple in a blaze,  
Our fathers piled their bones to raise,  
Like Erostratus thus their name,  
To damn to everlasting fame !

And shall the world behold at last  
The South her early honors blast ?  
The South, whose boast it was to be  
The cradle of our liberty ;  
The South, immortal for the feat  
Ordained our triumph to complete,  
When on his sun-resplendent wing  
The eagle, with exulting spring,  
Rushed to the skies, to snatch the stars  
Of heaven from their cerulean cars,  
And blend them in a wreath divine  
To coronal Columbia's shrine !

What wretch would blight our glory's crown,  
And cast his country's altars down ;  
Bid treason's flag unhallowed wave  
O'er Pinckney's, Sumpter's, Marion's grave ;  
The starry banner spurn to earth,  
And wade through blood—for Europe's mirth !  
His country's hate, creation's scorn,  
The curse of millions yet unborn !

Sons of the generous South ! your souls  
Your fathers' spirit still controls,  
Like them ye spurn oppression's chain,  
Like them would freedom's cause sustain,  
Like them at liberty's alarms  
Would battle with a world in arms,  
And not to breathe inglorious breath  
Would pile the pyramid of death—  
Oh then like them revere the laws ;—  
Sedition is not freedom's cause.

There may be sin in the excess  
Of virtue ;—this yourselves express.

Idolaters of liberty,  
Abhorring all that seems to be  
Oppression, at the very name  
Your passions burst into a flame ;  
Designing men, your minds to sway,  
Upon those fervid feelings play,  
For thus alone could they succeed  
Your generous spirit to mislead.

But listen now to reason's voice,  
And to the Father of our choice,  
Who with his erring children pleads  
With all the kindness that proceeds  
From the paternal heart, with all  
The eloquence that can enthrall  
The soul, with all the wisdom, too,  
That may the stubborn mind subdue,  
And all the firmness that awaits  
Of right the cause he vindicates.

It cannot be but you will hear  
His counsels with conviction's ear,



Expel sedition from the land,  
And to your brothers stretch the hand,  
To plight with them the hallowed vow  
Your fathers pledged on ruin's brow :  
Life, fortune, sacred honor, all  
To martyr at your country's call.

Then JACKSON, thou whose only aim  
Has been thy country's good and fame,  
Whose youth and manhood have been past  
In her protection to the last,  
Devoting heart, and head, and arm,  
To shield her from disgrace and harm ;  
Who now, while gathering clouds deform,  
Serene amid the rising storm,  
Hast spoken to the angry will  
Of passion's tempest, " Peace ! be still !"

Thou who hast watched with anxious eyes  
The discords of thy children rise,  
And sought with a paternal smile  
Their petty feuds to reconcile,

Nor ever from thy motto swerved,  
"THE UNION—IT MUST BE PRESERVED!"

When thou beholdest faction cease  
In bonds of brotherhood and peace,  
And all thy children, hand in hand,  
Around their country's altar stand,  
That welcome moment shall impart  
More triumph to thy generous heart,  
Than all the glory of the day  
That witnessed Britain's proud array  
In terror from thy arm retreat,  
And leave the lion at thy feet.

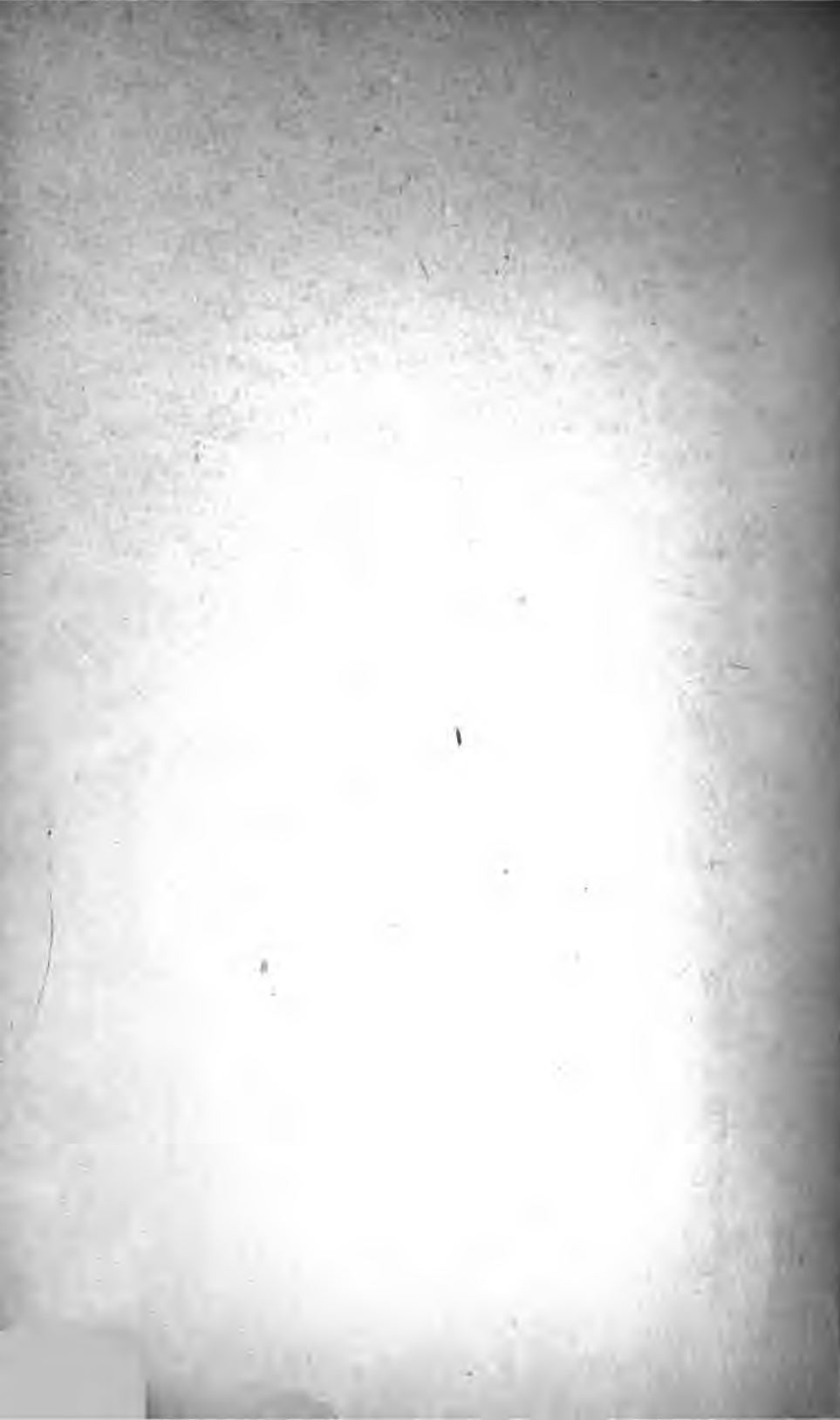
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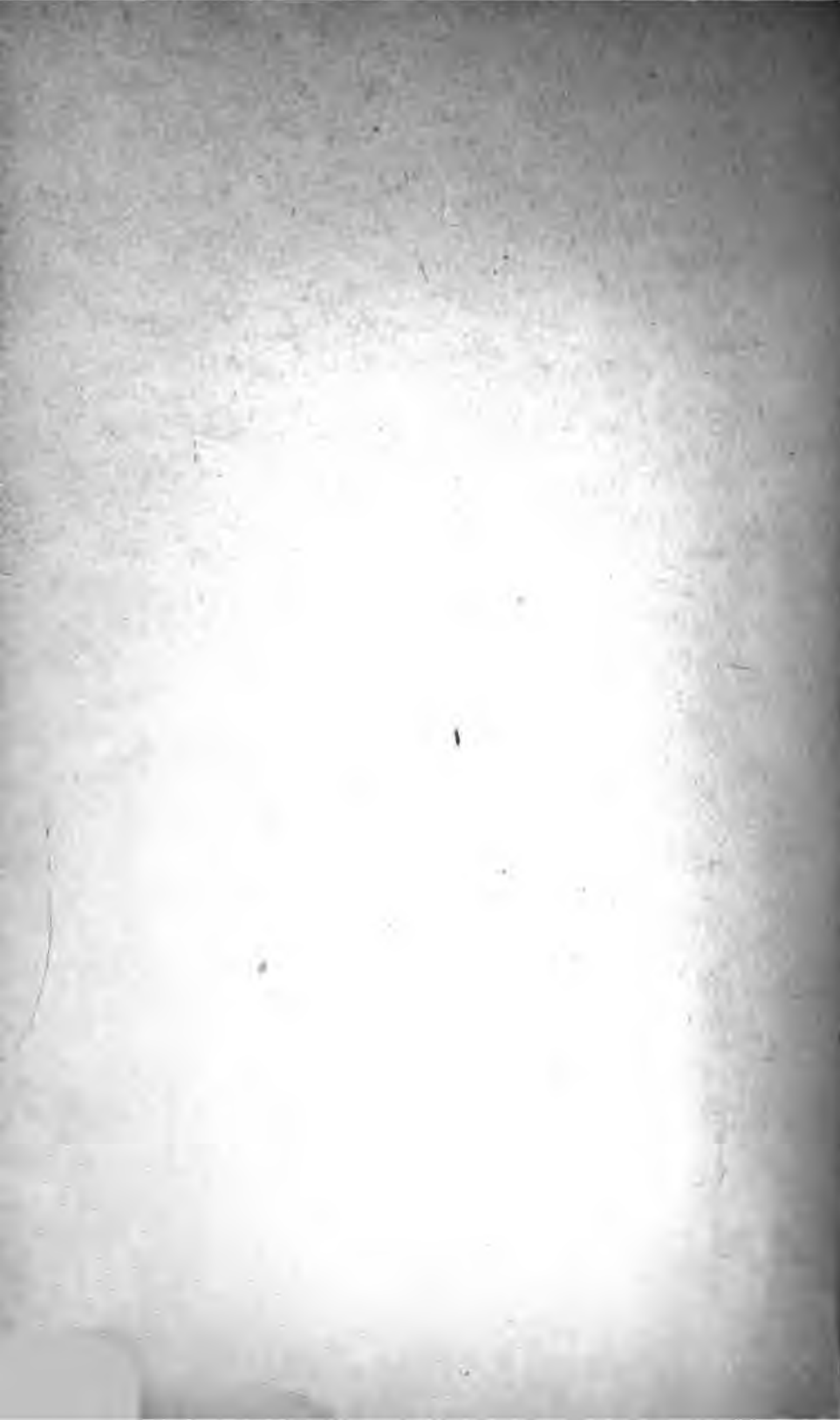




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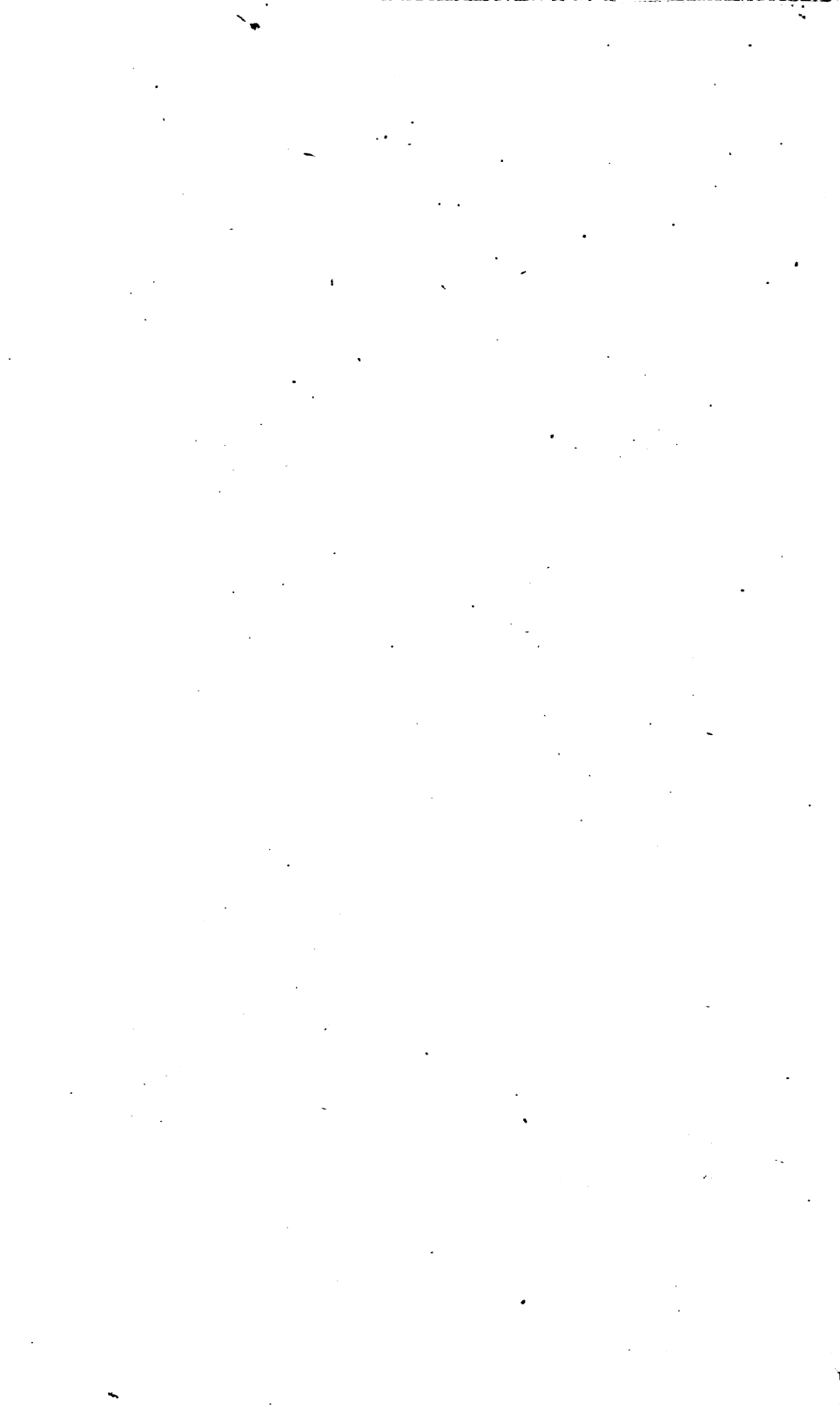
















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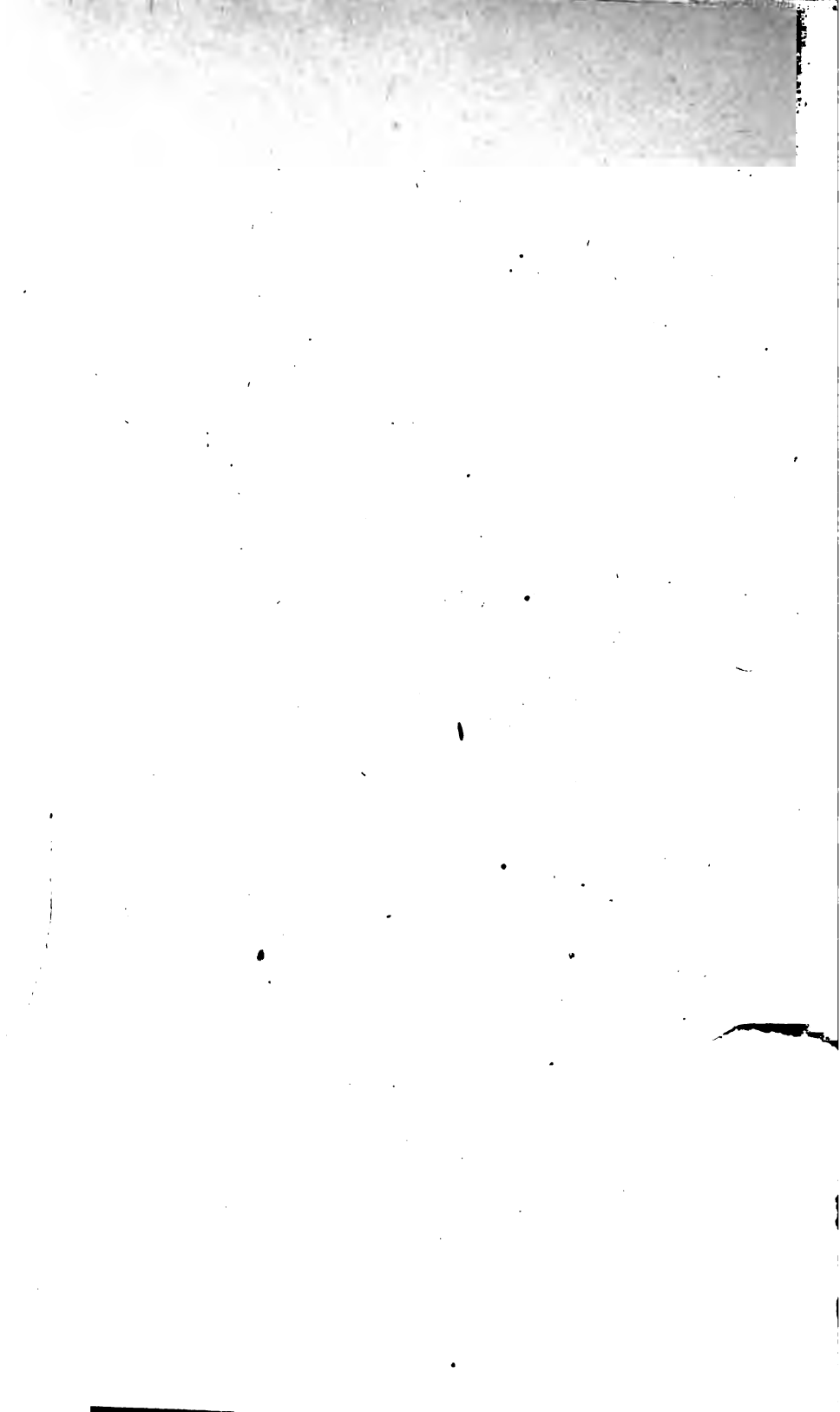
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